



The Megiddo Message

Devoted to the Cause of Christ

The Epistle of Second John

WORLD'S BEST-BRACED MEN

KEEP YOUR BALANCE BY MOVING AHEAD

SELF-CULTURE

MUSINGS OF THE EDITOR

MEDITATIONS ON THE WORD

YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

CAN YOU QUALIFY?

Vol. 43, No. 4

February 25, 1956

The Megiddo Message

February 25, 1956 Volume 43, No. 4

Percy J. Thatcher, Editor

A religious magazine, devoted to the cause of Christ and published for the dissemination of Bible truth alone, THE MEGIDDO MESSAGE will

- Strengthen your faith in the Bible
- Answer perplexing religious questions
- Give you courage for these uncertain times
- Help you live above the world's moral corruption
- Reveal to you how to develop a character acceptable to God
- Bring peace and stability to your life

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"If thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God."

—Proverbs 2: 3-5.

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Letters

Action Imperative!

Dear Brother:

Your articles on *One-mindedness* and *The At-one-ment* are splendid, and I am convinced are strictly the Truth.

I realize time is running out, and action is necessary to try and reach some good and honest hearts. May God bless all your efforts to save some from the terrible wreckage of man's ignorance, misbelief, and superstition.

Queensland, Australia

T. B.

The Train Waits for No Man

Dear Sister:

I often see the children down the street on their way to school. They can get a ride if they are ready when the truck leaves with other children, but some of them seem to have the habit of being late, and so miss their ride.

We find the same thing everywhere. The train does not wait for us, nor does the bus. They give people enough time to be at the station, but they must prepare for it. Time and tide wait for no man. Therefore, how important it is that we get ready for the second coming of Christ!

What else is there so important that we cannot find time for it!

Treherne, Manitoba

Mrs. A. R. V.

Victorious Living

Dear Sister:

I am more than persuaded that unabated faith is based on careful adherence to the precepts set forth in the Word. The Word, eaten daily and digested, brings comfort and assurance in times of peace or turmoil, as nothing else can.

Where once I was wont to grumble and complain if things did not meet my demands, now I try turning them into steppingstones to a richer and more satisfactory way of living. With each stride forward that much firmer is my belief.

Life is truly what you make it. So-called common surroundings can be turned into the real battleground of accomplishment for the Christian. Here we can diffuse such a zest for right living that even the dullness of the location will disappear under the steady sparkling light of our patience, cheerfulness, and helpfulness.

South Amboy, N. J.

L. M. K.

OBITUARY

JAKE DALMAN

Death has claimed one of our aged friends, Jake Dalman of St. Cloud, Minn., a subscriber to THE MEGIDDO MESSAGE since 1931, and a faithful correspondent. We extend sympathy to the bereaved, and the promise of the Word that death shall one day be swallowed up in victory.

THE EPISTLE OF SECOND JOHN

THE little essay known as Second John, far from being a personal letter, is an epistle for all time and to all believers, containing wisdom and truth so profound that it might well be classed as an "advanced study." While the Apostle Paul says very little of his relations with the Apostle John, it is certain that he knew him well for many years, and gloried in the revelations granted his friend and fellow-worker (II Cor. 12: 2-5). Paul's great zeal, energy and ability are uniquely his own, but he must have gained depth and spirituality through his associations with the great Christian mystic who was the favorite of the Master Himself. It was such matter as this short Epistle that Paul must have had in mind when he exclaimed, "O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" (Rom. 11: 33).

THE SALUTATION

"The elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth; and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth; for the truth's sake which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us forever. Grace be with you, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love."

Nowhere do we need more to apply the great Bible rule found in I Cor. 2: 13—"comparing spiritual things with spiritual"—than in a study of Second John. Following this rule, we learn that the "elect lady" to whom the letter is addressed is the Bride, the Lamb's wife (Rev. 19: 7), composed of all the faithful of the Day of Salvation. Since we are aspirants for that honor, its message is for us.

In this salutation to "the elect lady" John expresses the feeling of genuine Christian love and warm affection which every faithful minister of God has for the Church. Indeed, the very life and vitality of the Church is dependent upon the minister, and John was of the highest caliber.

He wrote this Epistle "for the truth's sake."

Faithful servants of God through the ages have utilized all their mental and physical powers, often hazarding health and life "for the truth's sake." They have written, suffered, bled, and died, counting not the fatigue and the pain, that the Church might be edified and enriched.

Looking deeply into these thirteen short verses of John's Second Epistle, we shall see what a vast wealth of spiritual knowledge is available to us, because John wrote "for the truth's sake."

THE MESSAGE

"I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father."

As the farmer rejoices in a bountiful harvest, so with the spiritual husbandman who beholds the fruits of his labors: There is no larger satisfaction, no greater source of joy to the faithful minister than to find his children walking in truth.

And he will express his joy, as did John. The leader's satisfaction is encouragement to the Church. It lifts the spirit, stimulates to still higher achievement and a holier walk. Few people are so self-sufficient as to carry on long without encouragement; and John was not slack to give it.

"And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another. And this is love, that we walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it."

This is the commandment—reduced to brevity and simplicity. A long category was unnecessary. More words would have been superfluous.

The commandment is "that we love one another." But let no one confuse this love with fickle sentimentality which adores today and despises tomorrow. This love is of a loftier strain—constant, changeless, enduring. "This is love, that we walk after his commandments." This love is expressed in action, not feeling; and action—a consistent, unwavering walk in the commandments—registers a devotion to God and the godly far excelling all the endearing words which heart could frame or lips could utter.

The next phase of John's message demands spiritual perception.

"For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist."

The natural man, seeing everything as literal, involves himself in endless difficulties and fails to comprehend the things of the Spirit of God, which are spiritually discerned (I Cor. 2: 14).

That this text cannot be literal is evident. The bare act of confessing that Jesus Christ existed in the flesh is meaningless; even His enemies admit as much. The churches pay Him extensive lip-service, and even go far beyond His own claims, making Him a God incarnate, who left His throne to die as a sacrifice for the sins of a fallen race.

This, of course, is paganized theology, and not Scripture. Jesus made no such assertions concerning Himself and His mission. He was not God, but the Son of God, having no existence before His birth. He came into the world, not as a predestined sacrifice, but to work out His own salvation, to provide the Perfect Example for all time to come, and to preach the good news of the coming Kingdom of which He was to be the head.

Seeking deep beneath the surface, as commanded in Prov. 2: 3-5, for the hidden meaning of this text, we ask, What is the flesh in which Christ came, and in what way does it benefit us? The answer is given by Jesus—"For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. . . . Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you" (John 6: 55, 53).

To insist that this is literal is to involve oneself in the aforementioned difficulties, for it is to sanction cannibalism, even though its practice is an impossibility, hence there is no salvation for man. The doctrine of transubstantiation, an ingenious invention of the apostate church which attempts to remove this impossibility, is nothing more than a vague form of that revolting vice. Its "Instructions for First Communion," explaining in childish language the mystery of the sacrament, asserts that the bread, after the consecrating words of the priest, still looks like bread, and even tastes like bread, but it is not bread—it is the body of Christ. Likewise the wine—which the communicant does not get—looks and tastes like wine, but it is not wine—it is the blood of Christ. The principle underlying ritual cannibalism, as practiced by primitive peoples, is that the virtues of another are absorbed by eating his flesh. The parallel is striking, to say the least.

We find, however, that men and women were eating this spiritual flesh of Christ centuries before the personal Christ was born.

"Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers . . . were baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat, and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock which followed them, and that Rock was Christ" (I Cor. 10: 1—4).

The personal Christ, not yet born, could not appear to the Children of Israel in the wilderness; but this Rock, the spiritual Christ, the Truth, the law of God, was provided for them in an eatable and assimilable form. The law of faith (Rom. 3: 27), ministered by angels as in the days of Noah and Abraham, and the carefully molded national code, delivered to Moses on Sinai, combined to give them a perfect spiritual food, a complete rule of life for their day and age.

That this is the meaning intended is made crystal clear in such passages as Jer. 15: 16, Luke 4: 4, and John 6: 63, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them." "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God." "It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the [literal] flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life."

Thus the much-misunderstood statement in John 1: 14, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us," does not teach the mysterious Incarnation of a Deity, but describes a process which has been going on since the dawn of the day of salvation, the Eternal delivering His Word to man through the medium of His Prophets and Apostles, culminating in His Son (Heb. 1: 1, 2; Eph. 2: 20).

Jesus Christ has come in the flesh. The Word lies before us, finished and complete, a thorough furnisher to all good works. The table is prepared (Ps. 23: 5) and the invitation extended to "whosoever will" (Prov. 9: 5, 6; Rev. 22: 17).

By denying that the Word is completely edible, or, in plain words, by saying that all the commandments of God need not and cannot be kept, the teachers of nominal Christendom fill the role of "deceiver and antichrist." As the same Apostle said, "even now are there many antichrists." The world is full of them.

The term means exactly what it implies: any one against or opposed to Christ is an antichrist. "He that is

not with me is against me," said Jesus in Luke 11: 23; there is no neutral ground. All deceivers, *even self-deceivers*, are antichrists. In view of the danger that, by an unchristian attitude or an unsundered thought, we find ourselves on the wrong side, it is small wonder that the opening words of the following verse are, "Look to yourselves."

"Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward."

The Apostle Paul, even in the later years of his glorious ministry when his self-mastery was virtually complete, recognized this ever-present danger of losing what he had wrought, when he wrote in I Cor. 9: 26, 27, "I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."

He knew that to turn aside from the Way taught by Jesus and preached by himself would be to throw away at one sweep the fruit of his long years of labor with self and with others, to lose forever all that he had wrought. He was directly inspired of God, but he needed no inspiration to comprehend this principle: it was basic from the beginning, and was stated with brilliant clarity by the Prophet Ezekiel (18: 24):

"When the righteous turneth from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, . . . all his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die." The rule operates both ways. "But if the wicked will turn from all his sins . . . and keep my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die. All his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him" (verses 21, 22).

What could be fairer?

With the possibility of losing our war ever present, so long as we are in this body of flesh, "Look to yourselves," is good advice. For if we do not look to ourselves, no one can or will do it for us. We can be helped by others, but when we face the Judgment it is our own works by which we shall stand or fall. Moses and Samuel might plead our cause (Jer. 15: 1), Noah, Daniel, and Job intercede for us (Ezek. 14: 20), but to no avail. "The Lord is a God of knowledge, and by him actions"—our own actions, not another's—"are weighed" (I Sam. 2: 3).

There are two ways to lose. The worst is to abandon the way of truth completely, to return to the "weak and beggarly elements" of the world, and by so doing lose utterly and irretrievably all our former gains. The case of the apostate is always a sad one: having caught a glimpse of a better life, things can never be the same as before; it is usually impossible to return with complete satisfaction to the old way of life. He dwells between two worlds and loses both. Jesus described his lot as that of one "walking through dry places, seeking rest and finding none," returning to his old home and finding it "empty, swept and garnished"—nothing there which satisfies. And at the Judgment, which he cannot escape, there will be bitter "weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Luke 13: 28), when he sees what he has lost, the reward which he might have had. Of this class it is truly said that it had

been better never to have been born, so great will be their remorse.

We are assured, however, that God will reward every man according to his works (Rev. 22:12). Apostates have no works: they have cancelled them by their apostasy, so they can qualify for no part of the reward. But what of that all-too-numerous class of covenant-makers who do not turn their backs, but neither do they go all the way to perfection? They try, but not hard enough; they run, but not fast enough. They waste the time which they should redeem. Their intentions are good, but their efforts do not match their intentions. Theirs is not a full and unconditional surrender. What of them?

Well, we believe that a merciful and just God has made provision for them. Mention of "full reward" for full service presupposes a partial reward for partial service. Even a slack service, if continued to the end, will not be forgotten, but rewarded liberally. The full reward is eternal life and glory in the Kingdom of God on earth, and none but the pure in heart shall attain to it (Matt. 5:8, 48). Yet before that Kingdom takes its final, completed form, there is to be a Millennium, a glorious reign of a thousand years over the devil bound—all evil suppressed—while the subjects of the Kingdom are being developed. It will be a great time to live in, a time of vast and stirring events, a time of momentous changes, of re-education and reconstruction, a time when poverty, insecurity, pain and sickness shall be no more. Death will be in the land, but only peaceful, painless death at the close of a long and happy life (Isa. 65:20). One year of life in that glorious age will be worth more than half a century of this troubled world.

It is in this period that the less culpable of the unfaithful servants shall receive the reward of their good works, a just and liberal reward, far more than they could ever have gleaned from the present at its best. Beyond the Millennium they cannot go, for at its close death and the grave shall be destroyed (Rev. 20:14; 21:4). Before that "eighth day" of eternal duration dawns, the last of them shall have joined their more rebellious companions in the dark embraces of the second, or penal, death.

The partial reward is a comforting thought, but let us never lean upon it. Let us aim for the "full reward." Aim high; in this contest for an eternal prize one may possibly strike lower, but never higher, than he aims.

"Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son."

Transgression alienates from Christ and God alike, for they are in absolute unity. Obedience, on the other hand, secures their favor.

"If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house [ecclesia, household of faith], neither bid him God speed: for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds."

A vital Bible principle is incorporated in this passage. There can be no fellowship between light and darkness (II Cor. 6:14-18), lest, by intermingling, the light be dimmed, its pure radiance lost. There is no other way that the high standard of the Church can be maintained except by complete separation from all who seek to intro-

duce doctrinal divisions. The warning was necessary in John's day, with the approaching Apostasy; and it is equally necessary today when men of the laxer sort seek to broaden out little by little the narrow way which leads to salvation. The way to life is ever strait and strict. Traversing it to the end will require the fullest energy of devout Christians without the subversive influence of dissenters.

The letter is complete and comprehensive, a guide to mature Christians in all ages, stating what to do and what to avoid to prevent losing membership with the elect lady, the bride or church of Christ.

THE COMPLIMENTARY CLOSE

"Having many things to write unto you, I would not write with paper and ink: but I trust to come unto you, and speak face to face, that our joy may be full. The children of thy elect sister greet thee."

SIGNATURE

John

Hear Ye Him

"HEAR ye Him," is the Divine command.

"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son. . . . Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?"

This is a direct command to each of us. We should read the Word of God therefore, in order to learn of Jesus and this great salvation promised those who serve and obey Him.

Some men read the Bible for its beautiful poetry, and they get their reward. Others read it to see exquisite history told with inimitable simplicity, and they have their reward. Others read it to find the loftiest morality, they also have their reward. But the true searcher is never satisfied with the fairest and most fragrant flowers in the garden, till he finds the Rose of Sharon.

If we are true Christians, we will hear the voice of God. It will be to us the sweetest, for it will be the voice "of our beloved." Every note of that voice will be sweet to us and will find a responsive echo in our hearts. "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth," will be our soul's ready language. When Thou speakest in mercy, I will hear in gladness. When Thou speakest with reproof, let me hear with submission, and deepest contrition.

Combat error with truth; always defend the Bible.

Hold God's law in one hand, and our soul in the other, for daily comparison.

World's Best-Braced Men

IT HAS BEEN SAID: "Christians ought of all men to be best braced, and the most bracing." In God they have their trust. They ought to move out in confidence and courage, strong with a strength not their own, purposeful with a power beyond themselves.

We can be certain that we express Christianity without exaggeration when we speak of it in terms of health and strength, as a steely muscular, red corpuscular thing, when we have mentioned its stamina and vitality. And much can be said about the wholesomeness and healthfulness of a living faith. It produces the world's best-braced men.

The Christian is so well-braced that he does not allow either his fortunes or misfortunes through life to affect him unduly. Aware that "the fashion of this world" is passing away, his heart is not set on his earthly possessions. The stock-market may drop, reducing the value of his financial holdings, but that cannot bring discouragement. Inflation may eat into the real value of his life's savings, making him more dependent upon others during his declining years, but that cannot cause him to complain—he still is confident all things are working together for his good. His treasure is in heaven, "where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal"; he still will count himself fabulously rich in possession of the knowledge that one day, if faithful to the end, he can be a co-inheritor of the unsearchable riches of Christ.

Frustration of a long-cherished ambition will not sour him on life, or make him morose. Perhaps age or impaired health may prevent him from filling the important place in the Church or community affairs that he once hoped to fill, but that cannot affect his constancy toward God's service. He will be equally as fervent in filling another, lesser, place, and nothing can blight his hope of future success.

If tragedy comes, he will be so well braced as to be able to understand it, and make use of it. If an irreparable loss is sustained in the passing of a cherished friend or companion, he will say to himself: I have indeed suffered a great loss, but I still can carry on. This stinging experience cannot last always, and although life can never be quite the same, I can adjust myself to the changed situation, with a keener interest in the world to come where heartaches shall be unknown.

The inner calm of the early Christians was noteworthy. The historic account of that period is a depressing chronicle of anarchy and chaos, of rapacious government, social unrest and unemployment, of bloody insurrection and savage repression, of brigandage and terrorism. Events for several decades had been working up to the fatal rebellion of A. D. 70, which brought the Jewish Age to a violent end, and the secular history of the time would give the impression that life was so miserable and uncertain as to be well-nigh unbearable. Yet of all this, scarcely a word appears in the Acts of the Apostles, the Christian history of the time. Why not? It was not that the writers did not know of it, but it simply did not matter.

The Apostles and their followers were men and women strong enough and well-enough braced to hold a true

course in a stormy time, and while the Jewish world was going fast to destruction, they were going on to perfection. It was their great opportunity to make good, and they did it. Complete consecration lifted them to a stratosphere where the storms no longer mattered; minor inconveniences, "light afflictions," no more.

Among Paul's words to brace Christians we find the following: "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might"; "Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness"; "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong" (Eph. 6: 10; Col. 1: 11; 1 Cor. 16: 13). And the record of their lives attests to the strength they possessed.

Listen once again to the way Paul puts it: "For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's" (Rom. 14: 8). The hope the early Christians held made them so strong that they could face even death without fear. If Cæsar did not like the way they were behaving, so much the worse for Cæsar. He could do them no permanent harm. Though he might take their temporal life, he could not take from them their eternal existence, the prize laid up in store for them; and the sleep of death could be no more than a short interlude, a brief pause in a life to be picked up again at Resurrection Day, and continue on forever.

But a study of this theme would be incomplete without an allusion to the life history of Paul himself. Few men have been braced against all hazards as was this staunch defender of the faith. We shall permit him to speak for himself in his charge to the elders of Ephesus: "And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: save that the Holy Spirit witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide [wait for—margin] me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20: 22—24).

The hope that the eternal God was their refuge, and underneath were the everlasting arms, buttressed the spirits of Patriarch and Prophet during the centuries preceding the Christian Era. King David said: "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? . . . Though a host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident" (Ps. 27: 1, 3). A man feels strong when he has a person of power behind him to back him up; but think of the strength potential of having God on our side! God will befriend all who will befriend Him. And "if God be for us, who can be against us?"

The Prophet Micah felt this same power surging in him, when he said: "But truly I am full of power by the spirit of the Lord, and of judgment, and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin" (3: 8). In Nahum 1: 7 we read: "The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble."

The Lord commanded Joshua, Moses' successor, to "be

strong and very courageous." And Jeremiah was enjoined not to be afraid of the faces of the people of Israel to whom he was sent, and was given this assurance: "I am with thee, saith the Lord, to deliver thee" (Jer. 1: 19). How could a man be better braced against the opposition he would encounter!

And so today, as we discover the grand, spreading horizons of eternity, all glowing with hope and radiant with promise, all fear and uncertainty should depart from us; and boldness, courage and strength take their place.

One situation in which the Christian can show his steadfastness is in his patient waiting for the coming of Christ. The years pile up, and Christ is not here. "Scoffers" arise, saying, "Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation" (II Pet. 3: 4). And the unfaithful servants are saying: "My lord delayeth his coming," and are beginning to "eat and drink with the drunken." But neither the ever-lengthening years, nor the disparagements of the skeptic and apostate can weaken his faith. He knows God's plan cannot fail, that the truth of Christ's personal return to earth is as immutable as the laws governing the movements of the stars, or that bring about day and night; so he braces himself against all hazards, and proceeds to work as he waits.

Hebrews 10: 36—39 (Moffatt) sets the tone for the well-braced life: "Steady patience is what you need, so that after doing the will of God you may get what you have been promised. For in a little, a very little now, the Coming One will arrive without delay. Meantime my just man shall live on by his faith; if he shrinks back, my soul takes no delight in him. We are not the men to shrink back and be lost, but to have faith and so to win our souls."

1956 EDITION

God's Spiritual Creation

JUST OFF THE PRESS

The pages of this booklet unfold the significance of the Creation Allegory of the first three chapters of Genesis. These chapters, taken literally, have long been a stumbling block to the clergy, a puzzle to the laity, and an object of scorn and ridicule to the scientist and critic. This booklet shows that instead of relating the work of the natural creation these chapters outline the moral development and ultimate salvation of the true Church.

This work is the result of years of study by the Rev. L. T. Nichols, founder of the Megiddo Mission, and the whole is based on his discourses on Genesis which comprised 48 lectures.

80 pages, size 6 by 9 inches.

Price each 20 cents postpaid.

Keep Your Balance

by Moving Ahead

"WHAT happened that you fell out of bed, Larry?" inquired a mother of her young son.

"I guess, Mommy, I stayed too close to the getting-in place," replied the child.

This very common incident of child life holds a deep spiritual lesson for us.

In God's Instruction Book we are made acquainted with the fact that the Lord also has a bed (Isa. 28: 20), and to be saved and left in this bed when He appears (Luke 17: 34) we must not only get all the way in, but we must fit it, as well; for the Lord is pleased with neither dwarfs nor monstrosities. And the matter of keeping our balance while reaching there is a problem with which every Christian must concern himself.

Balance is essential to physical life, and the principle of balance runs through man's temporal and spiritual career. The infant must acquire a degree of physical balance before it can sit alone; and more, to be able to creep or stand alone; and the child must learn to stand steady before it can walk or run.

With physical balance, mental and emotional balance is needed to make of men and women successful individuals. In fact, balance or equilibrium is one of life's vital factors; without it the individual would be of no use to himself or others.

Observation shows clearly that there is not an oversupply of balanced individuals in secular life, and the number who manifest mental poise in things pertaining to their future welfare is still smaller. Physical unbalance is bad, but lacks by far the serious consequences that spiritual unbalance entails.

The spiritual life, like the physical, must have its starting point. Peter speaks of this in his First Epistle (ch. 2: 2, Phillips): "You are babies, newborn in God's family, and you should be crying out for the unadulterated spiritual milk to make you grow!" From this small, weak, wavering beginning, divine balance is to be gradually added in all things.

You may ask, "But how can I maintain my equilibrium when I am jostled, pushed and jolted off balance from every side—temptations and trials without and within?"

Well, it is not easy, as all who have made an earnest attempt can testify; yet it is possible.

A few test questions may reveal where our balance needs correcting.

How do we react when one is preferred above us?

Are we envious of what someone else possesses, or jealous of the attention accorded another?

Do we become bitter over a real or fancied slight or injustice?

Are we able to work harmoniously with others, or do we lose our balance by getting upset and offish if they should not happen to think, speak or act according to our ideas?

One great cause of failure lies in attempted coalition of past and present. To remedy this, we must let the things of the past be past. Take from them the words of encouragement, help from warnings given, wisdom from lessons learned, and put them to use in our todays and

tomorrows, building for ourselves new desires, aspirations and goals.

One of the major causes of our teetering on the edge of the "bed" is due to the conflict of our objectives with our desires. We are of a divided mind and want personal pleasure as well as superior achievement. We keep one eye on the world's pleasures, the other on the pleasures God offers. Such an attitude will gain us little in this life, and nothing in the "world to come." As James warns, "The man who trusts God, but with inward reservations, is like a wave of the sea, carried forward by the wind one moment and driven back the next. That sort of man cannot hope to receive anything from God, and the life of a man of divided loyalty will reveal instability at every turn."

Is our judgment balanced? Do we become easily upset, letting our feelings run away with our reason? Good judgment is to the human what a gyroscope is to a ship. Good judgment keeps us on an even keel when the storms of passion rage.

If we aim to help others—which is done best by example—emotional balance is a necessity. Our moods, likes, whims, and notions must be governed and maintained by the power of Truth. We then shall be steady, moderate, moving in one direction and with a fixed purpose.

It is not that we can have no emotion, ardor or desire. Intellect without emotion is empty of power. For instance, you can speculate for years on countless petty theories without so much as caring for any of them. He who succeeds must first *long* to do it. Passion is the energizer of purpose. Whatever the objective you may frame for your own life, unless there is feeling behind that objective, unless you are gripped by an emotion, a passion to conquer, you cannot come off victorious. There is no real motion without emotion. Good judgment keeps your passions in a useful sphere. With good judgment you can turn your emotional powers into a constructive channel. It was the great Apostle who enjoins us to be "zealously affected always in a good thing."

Can we meet difficult and provoking situations without losing our spiritual poise? When others are upset, do we remain calm? If so, then we apply a powerful counterbalance to them. We need to teach ourselves the calm which comes from emotional balance. "Let your power of self-control," says the Philippian letter, "be known unto all." It is infantile temper that strikes, flutters, shouts in contempt. Like quarreling boys, shallow temper betrays itself in noise and tumult. But godly passion is different. It is the crystallization of purpose, and is balanced and quiet. Transform your passion into high, white purpose, and then use it; guide it with judgment, shape it with wisdom.

Can those around see that our balance, our power of self-control, is improving? It is not difficult in natural life to see the difference in the balance of an infant and that of a matured and steady adult.

One of the most revealing tests of Christian balance is the way we take and profit by reproof. "No chastening seems pleasant at the time: it is, in fact, most unpleasant. Yet when it is all over we can see that it has quietly produced the fruit of real goodness in the characters of those who have accepted it in the right spirit."

Like the child, we shall need help to keep our balance,

but as we grow, we should gain more of the necessary Christian balance. Years alone do not bring it. Paul spoke of a class whom time had not matured. "I, my brothers, was unable to talk to you as spiritual men: I had to talk to you as unspiritual, as yet babies in the Christian life." "At a time when you should be teaching others, you need teachers yourselves to repeat to you the A B C of God's revelation to men!"

It is the daily transactions as well as the crises in our lives that show if we are moving forward or are still too close to the "getting-in place."

We often believe if this or that were only changed we could accomplish miracles. Well, that is true. But the "this or that" that needs to be changed is our personal deviousness. Trouble is a challenge to us, it keeps us alert. A well-balanced seaman was never developed standing on the deck of a vessel riding at anchor behind a good breakwater. Neither will a sheltered life develop spiritual balance.

So move forward. Know yourself, your weak points, your strong points, where you are easily upset. Take things in stride, reverses or successes. Let nothing from without take command of us. Balance is an inside job, and our biggest.

SELF-CULTURE

OF all ambitions, what could be more honorable than that of self-culture; of disciplining, training and refining the moral nature? It is a fault of the age to substitute mere learning for God's wisdom; to educate the outward man and forget the more important education, that of the inner man. Scholastic men and women speak of book education but overlook the moral training where, in this great common arena of life, they must battle the contrary forces to perfect their character.

The problems encountered in self-culture are far-reaching. They embrace our entire life from the time reason dawns upon us until death closes the scene of action. Issues are constantly pressing upon us; and our happiness, both now and future, depends upon how we meet these problems. Making good use of them will contribute to our growth in this noble and godly life. But to neglect the opportunities afforded us is to become as the stunted shrub that falls short of being a stately tree with mighty branches and luxuriant foliage.

In the development of a Christian character, time is a deciding factor. Since it takes time to make oneself over, we need to develop a keen sense as to the value of time. We must press all the odds and ends of time into use. The hours, days, weeks—how quickly they pass away and are gone forever! Lost articles may be regained or replaced, but time—never. Even while these lines are being read, time is being numbered with the dead past and the dying present. How we should redeem every minute! Yes, we must be misers of time.

It is easy to say "wait awhile"; so easy to let the burden of today's work and duties fall upon tomorrow's time, and so wait for a more convenient season. It is one thing to intend to lead a new life, but another thing to find time to do it. So, then, set a price upon the moments. They are sands of precious gold. If properly expended,

they will procure for us millions of years in eternity.

This self-training is a priceless schooling, and every circumstance in life is a lesson. We are indeed in the Almighty's great school of learning, where adding and subtracting is taught in every minute problem. It takes in the daily adding of good and the subtracting of evil out of our lives. In this school we acquire discernment that teaches us to choose the right and refuse the wrong.

Self-culture is based primarily upon thought holiness. Every thought leaves an impression on the mind; every godly motive weaves a thread in the garment of our action. On the other hand, every passion plows a discomfiting furrow into the soul. Are we, then, training those thoughts so that everything we do and say lifts us to higher levels? It is only noble thoughts that will stir, invigorate and expand the striving mind. As the magnificent river, rolling in the pride of its mighty waters, owes its source to the hidden springs of some distant mountain nook, so will a Christian's self-culture be traced to the foundation of pure and lofty thoughts that were cherished.

Self-culture and love are synonymous. Love, which is the keeping of God's commandments (I John 5:3), has the same saving properties as does self-culture. We cannot have one without the other. The Apostle Paul proves that the two are inseparable, when he enumerates the qualifications of a cultured Christian (I Cor. 13:4-8, Moffatt): "Love is very patient, very kind, love knows no jealousy; love makes no parade, gives itself no airs, is never rude, never selfish, never irritated, never resentful; love is never glad when others go wrong, love is gladdened by goodness, always slow to expose, always eager to believe the best, always hopeful, always patient."

It takes indefatigable energy, largeness of soul and fixed purpose to master self. Our human nature is conquered only by self-culture combined with intense application of the Word of Truth, and that by a mighty struggle. We cannot dream ourselves into a perfect character but must hammer and forge ourselves into perfection. The carnal mind, such as it is, has a way of constantly asserting itself and demanding attention; it craves approbation which it has not rightly earned; resents taking second place; seeks the praise and fair speeches, as well as honor, from man; and is vexed and annoyed at kindly reproofs and warnings. As courage is added, all this carnality is overcome by goodness. Having courage we become an influence and an inspiration to others. We shall then be a living example of Truth.

If possessing courage we shall have strength to carry out every valiant purpose beyond the stage of mere words; intentions will be formulated into action; worthy designs become more than contemplated projects. Courage, when exercised, will overcome any seductive power of temptation, and will enable us to conquer all obstacles before they conquer us.

Full of courage, we shall be like the worthy ones who have gone on before us. They knew no such word as "failure." Defeat only gave them added strength, and difficulties only taught them the necessity of redoubled effort.

He who becomes successful in self-culture is a person who practices humility. The humble individual may be financially poor, but rich in character. If humble, he will be free from pride and arrogance; in fact, he will see himself as he really is. He is one who will not be found

(Continued on page 11)

Musings of the Editor

IF we can only hold on to the Almighty like Jacob did to the angel, and not let go until we receive the blessing, we shall come out all right.

What a night Jacob had!

From the time he left his uncle's house, he faced trouble. Laban had prospered during the years that Jacob had been with him. He did not want Jacob to leave. And although in the end Jacob left without letting his uncle know, Laban did not take revenge upon him. God stood in the way.

Holding on to the angel Then Jacob faced another trial. His brother Esau, who had said he would kill him, was coming up against him with four hundred men.

Jacob wasted no time. He went right to work arranging as best he could for the safety of those with him. He was determined to be prepared as far as he could go. But he realized the inadequacy of his own strength. He knew that should his brother still be angry with him, his life and the lives of those with him would be in danger. He did on his part, he did all that he could, then he prayed to God.

That night the angel appeared to Jacob. There was a trial there, a testing, a struggling to see whether he would hold on. A mortal would never wrestle with an angel, but the angel was testing Jacob. He touched his thigh and Jacob went limping along, but he never let go of that angel. There is a great lesson in it for us. He did not let that immortal go until he blessed him.

Then it was that the angel told him his name would be changed to Israel, which means a true soldier of God. "For as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed" (Gen. 32:28).

Jacob was delivered. Esau came and did not harm him.

Hosea speaks of that time when Jacob prevailed with the angel and got the blessing: "He took his brother by the heel in the womb, and by his strength he had power with God: yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed: he wept, and made supplication unto him: he found him in Bethel, and there he spake with us" (Hos. 12:3, 4).

If we hold on to the Almighty, we shall not only get what we ask, but "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Eph. 3:20). But there will be a testing; He will not bless us right away. We shall have to hold on through a long dark night, and it will be a struggle to hold on. But when the day breaks, when the morning comes, if we have endured unto the end, God will bless us. He will grant us power, not only over our enemies, but over the nations of the earth (Rev. 2:26); and then our name shall be changed to that of "a prince of God."

A Reminder

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Meditations

On the Word

'He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy' (Proverbs 28: 13).

It is not true, say the naturalists, that the ostrich buries his head in the sand and imagines he is concealed. If it were, ostrich hunting would be a tame affair and the species long ago extinct. Possibly an unusually stupid individual did such a thing once upon a time, giving rise to the legend. But the reputed action of the bird is so thoroughly characteristic of a familiar trait in human nature that the myth survives among our figures of speech. For we have all, without exception, been "ostriches" in our efforts to conceal our shortcomings, and with about as much success.

We may deceive ourselves—that is easy. All we have to do is to shut our eyes, so to speak, and we can imagine anything. Man is a rationalizing being, rather than a rational one, and seldom knows—at least, to the point of acknowledgement—the real motives underlying most of his acts. In order to "save face" with himself, he selects a reason which places him in the most favorable light, and proceeds to convince himself of its genuineness. Dispassionate, completely objective appraisal of one's own motives is one of the most difficult tasks in the world.

We may also deceive our fellow men in regard to our failings—all of them some of the time and some of them all of the time, as Lincoln said—but the deception is seldom as successful as we imagine, it involves us in an endless sequence of embarrassing complications, and all in all it would be far less of a strain to avoid the transgression in the first place, if we but thought so.

But all these cheap dissimulations, whether deliberate, habitual or unconscious, are a waste of time and effort, for one colossal fact stands like a mountain athwart our crooked path—we cannot deceive God. And, after all, that is the only thing that matters, if we are really in earnest.

"Whither shall I go from thy spirit?" cried the Psalmist, pursued by dark memories of an unsuccessful attempt to conceal a darker sin, "or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee. Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether" (Psalm 139: 7, 11, 12, 3, 4).

Ezekiel the upright warned a people unusually prone to double dealing: "Thus saith the Lord: Thus have ye said, O house of Israel, for I know the things which come into your mind, every one of them" (11: 5).

Those who cover their tracks seldom prosper in this life, and in the Day of Judgment, when the secrets of the heart are revealed and the true motives of our every

action stand naked before our Judge, instead of prosperity there will be grief and desperate sorrow (Isa. 17: 10, 11). Since "the eyes of the Lord are in every place" (Prov. 15: 3), since He knows our every thought, word and action, what profit shall we find in concealing temporarily from our brethren? Why will we allow a "proud look" to lead to "a lying tongue" (Prov. 6: 17) in a vain attempt to bolster our credit with mere mortals? It isn't worth it. It is far more sensible, and, as we said before, in the long run simpler and easier to wash our "face" instead of trying to save it.

This washing is a twofold process, and its elements are *confession and forsaking*. The second is impossible without the first, and the first is worthless without the second. There has been a great deal of confessing done in the religious world since the beginning of the Apostasy, but very little forsaking, which is by far the "bigger half."

Since we have all sinned, and the commandment is definite that we must confess our sins, the question presents itself, To whom are we to confess? Well, that depends upon the nature of the transgression. The confessional, as practiced by the formal churches, is thoroughly unscriptural, being based upon the false doctrine of a succession of Apostles with delegated power to forgive sins. As it seems to work out in actual practice, it is an endless round of sin and confess, sin and confess, go and sin some more, always hoping that the end of the way will find you in a position to make one last confession and receive final absolution.

Nevertheless, in spite of its illegitimacy and its abuses, the institution of auricular confession fulfills a deep psychological need; and while our secret sins and our struggles with self may be confessed privately to our Heavenly Father, we shall often find it helpful to "talk it out" with a trusted spiritual advisor, and then make a new start with a lighter heart. The personal counselor is as important to the health of the soul as the physician to the body, and more so. It goes without saying that an injury to another must be acknowledged to him or her personally, and that flagrant public offenses require public repentance.

It is far preferable, of course, not to sin, and that is the peak to which we must attain; but all of us have offended against Divine law in the past, even after knowing its requirements. But the God who enacted that Law and who knows our frame, remembering that we are dust, has decreed in His mercy that the old score need not stand against us. From the beginning of the plan of salvation, the hope of mankind has been the forgiveness of sins. It requires no penalty, no bloody sacrifice of an innocent man, to wipe out the dark record of the past, but only a reformation of our lives, a turning away from every evil way and the performance of all good works.

The cleansing formula is given by Isaiah (1: 16—20): "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow." Then, on these conditions and no other, "though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land; but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

Your Questions Answered



BIBLICAL PERSONAL CURRENT

Do you have a question? Personal replies will be sent to Biblical questions to any correspondent, and counsel will be offered on problems pertaining to the spiritual life. THE MEGIDDO MESSAGE will publish only the most helpful discussions for the benefit of other readers. No names shall be mentioned.

Who preached to the "spirits in prison" (I Peter 3: 19, 20), and who were they?

Some rather weird theology has been built upon this passage, which is far less complicated than the theologians would have it. Note that verse 20 sets the time of the incident as the "days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing." Who did the preaching? Certainly not the personal Jesus, for this was 2,400 years before His birth, and He did not pre-exist. Second Peter 2: 5 informs us that Noah was the "preacher of righteousness" to the antediluvian world, and through him the spiritual Christ, the words of truth, made appeal to a generation who were, like all mankind, in the prison house of darkness (Isaiah 42: 7).

We ourselves were in this same "prison," our minds being darkened by fables and superstitions, until a latter-day Noah convinced us that safety was to be found in the Ark, the strong tower of Truth (Prov. 18: 10). The fiction that Jesus' soul descended into the nether world and preached to its inhabitants is out of harmony with the whole teaching of the Bible; which is, that in the death state there is no consciousness, and even Jesus was no exception.

I realize that the doctrine of "Original sin" is false, but what did David mean when he said: "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Psalm 51: 5)?

This text, like so many portions of Scripture, has a spiritual significance with no reference to a natural mother, conception, or birth. The Word of God clearly reveals that every man shall be accountable only for his own sins and not for those of another; and that the parents' sins do not make the children sinners also, unless they sin likewise (Ezek. 18, 33; Deut. 24: 16).

The American Translation renders this verse: "So in guilt was I begotten, and in sin did my mother conceive me." We are begotten or conceived spiritually by our Mother the Truth (Gal. 4: 26; James 1: 18), that is, we learn the law of God and agree to abide by it. Being placed under the law, we become sinners when we transgress (Rom. 2: 12), but under the guidance of Truth we grow up in the "womb" of our "Mother," or work out our own salvation (Phil. 2: 12; Eph. 2: 21). When the last member of the body has completed his work, or grown to full manhood in Christ, and Jesus returns, then we shall be worthy of the Spirit birth and be clothed with immortality (I Cor. 15: 53, 54; John 3: 3).

How is God the Saviour of all men (I Timothy 4: 10)?

The Greek word *soter* means a deliverer, a preserver. While it is only those who have made themselves worthy who shall be delivered from mortality, there is a sense in which God is the Preserver of all men. This is elaborated by the Apostle Paul in his memorable sermon on Mars' Hill in Athens: "Seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; . . . for in him we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17: 25, 28). All physical life comes from God, and is maintained by His eternal laws; "If he gather unto him his spirit and his breath, all flesh shall perish together, and man shall turn again unto dust." To

this extent, all men are said to be God's children; but, legally and morally, "The children of the flesh . . . are not the children of God" (Rom. 9: 8), but must enter His spiritual family by adoption (Rom. 8: 15; Gal. 4: 5).

Are angels persons, or good thoughts that govern us and cause us to do good?

When the angel Gabriel came to Daniel, he touched him, he talked with him, he had heard his prayer. Daniel refers to him as "the *man* Gabriel," and he was caused to fly swiftly to him; and Luke calls him the "angel Gabriel."

When the angels came to Abraham (Gen. 18) he recognized them as real men, at least to the extent that he prepared food for them and they ate it. While one foretold the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah the other two went on to hasten Lot from the doomed city, which they later destroyed. All these occurrences were not just good thoughts but actual facts—foretold, recorded and verified.

What does it mean to "fear the Lord"? I think we should love Him.

Fear and love in the Bible sense are identical. To fear the Lord is "to hate evil, pride, arrogance, the evil way, and the froward mouth" (Prov. 8: 13). To love Him is to keep His commandments (I John 5: 3).

As Christians we must fear. We should earnestly "fear lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest" we should come short of it by letting His commandments slip (Heb. 2: 1). The fear of the Lord brings comfort and peace of mind; we are never disturbed by it.

Does a Christian have to give up dancing and card playing?

Yes. A Christian's calling is the highest—to be like Christ. Pressing toward the high standard of character necessary to imitate His holiness forbids anything, everything, that is not making the very most of our time. We are commanded to do all we do to God's glory (I Cor. 10: 31) which excludes such worldly pleasures. Moreover, see Rom. 12: 1; II Cor. 6: 17, 18; Eph. 5: 15, 16.

SELF-CULTURE

(Continued from page 9)

depreciating the efforts of others to glorify himself; neither will he put undue stress upon imaginary slights and offenses. He will be beyond all the petty trifles carnality is heir to.

The truly humble individual is not like the breakers that roar along the shallow shores, but like the still waters that run deep, and like the ocean depths, calm and mute. In humility, he learns knowledge and spreads cheer and good will about him; he does not herald his comings and goings; he beats no drums; he displays no streamers and seeks not the praise of man; but he reminds you of angels who though ministering constantly to others yet themselves are invisible.

Let us become alerted! Let self-culture be the current that will move us to finish all problems assigned us, that God may multiply unto us the grand things of Eternity.

CAN YOU QUALIFY?

As you are daily filling your allotted "threescore . . . ten"
Do you have some objective to attain;
Or are you passing aimlessly among your fellow men,
Without a goal, or hope of future gain?
Or, are you one to push the work, anticipating where
The call for volunteers is sure to come;
And, ere the call is sounded, put in your appearance there,
Prepared to work until the task is done?

If of this latter number there's a place for you, my friend;
A place for you within the ranks of God.
For He can use material that will not quickly bend,
Until it feels the pressure of His Rod.
He seeks for those with strength to say "No!" to the tempter's wiles,
And turn their backs on every form of sin.
Yes, there's a place for one who will avoid all that defiles;
And he a crown of life shall surely win.

Our Captain seeks for soldiers who will hold His banner high,
And not allow its folds to touch the dust;
For men inured to hardship, ready for the Truth to die,
Yes, die to sin, and call the sentence just.
He is enlisting men to fight for glory, honor, fame;
Who for the Lord will bear the battle's brunt;
And, though He *seems* to tarry, never murmur or complain,
Or in the time of need desert the front.

The search is on for men who want more than the world can give;
Who, weary with the transient joys of earth
And vexed with its ungodliness, long for a place to live
Apart from all its foolishness and mirth;
For men with vision to behold by faith the dawning of
A wondrous Day, when man shall rule no more,
When "Peace" shall be the watchword, and the ruling motive, "Love";
These are the men our Lord is looking for.

The rules are strict, but if you think that you can qualify,
Then step right up, and do not hesitate
To bid for service in His ranks; the sooner you apply,
The higher and more noble your estate.
He promises a hundredfold the while we journey here;
A hundredfold, with trials to be borne;
With life eternal in the Kingdom now so very near;
Yes, life unending in that coming Morn.

So come, ye who would fight for gain, ye brave and daring ones,
All ye who would be soldiers of the cross;
And in His royal army join the multitude of sons
Who for His service count earth's pleasures loss.
Abundantly above all you can ask or think is yours,
A glory far exceeding that of earth;
With riches and great honor for the soldier who endures,
All these are promised with the Spirit birth.

—L. L. S.